

**COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO DRAMA**  
**Department: Visual and Performing Arts Instructor: Heather Chesley**  
**Grades: 9, 10, 11, 12**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION INTRODUCTION TO DRAMA:** As an introduction to the performing arts, this course is designed to develop communication through storytelling. Beginning with the origins of theater, continued through modern playwrights, students will discover the evolution of both the written word and physical performance. Units will include the study, analysis, and impact of dramatic literature throughout history, basic acting techniques (both voice and movement), improvisations, monologues and scene work. Elements of design will be incorporated in the study of each unit as well as the bi-annual student performance. Students will complete the year having performed on stage at least twice and several times in the classroom. By utilizing the techniques learned, students will gain physical and vocal confidence applicable in any field of study, while gathering an understanding of theater as a living art.

**Length:** Two semesters (10 units)

**Prerequisite for enrollment:** none

**Type of course:** Elective

**I. COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- A. To expose students to theater's impact throughout history, by studying an overview of each play's time period (politics, religion and art) from the viewpoint of the time, the author, and the audience.
- B. To discover an appreciation for theater's modern relevance.
- C. To build vocal and physical self confidence, or self esteem, much needed in personal and professional relationships including body language and speaking voice.
- D. To build vocal and physical self confidence, or self esteem, specific for performance.
- E. To provide a creative atmosphere for both the individual and the ensemble.
- F. To expose students to theater's relationship to all other art forms.
- G. To develop critical thinking as readers, viewers and creators of theater.

**II. COURSE OUTLINE**

**A. Building an Ensemble**

**1. Vocal**

- a) Understanding of the physiological logistics of the human voice: breath, lungs, diaphragm, vocal folds, jaw and tongue
- b) Relaxation work towards freeing muscular stress in the vocal instrument
- c) Exercises focused on articulation and projection
- d) Exercises connecting voice to movement (Linklater, Alexander)

**2. Movement**

- a) Connecting physical behavior to pictures for the stage
- b) Connecting physical choices to the development of character.
- c) Relaxation and focus exercises designed to connect the body with the voice. (Alexander)
- d) Improvisation Work, Theater Games
- e) Stage direction

**3. Acting Technique**

- a) Stage terminology, stage directions
- b) Study of environment, objective, conflict & status (Stanislovski, Adler, Meisner, Hagen & Clurman)
- c) Specific to auditions
- d) Specific to speech
- e) Specific to interviews

**4. Performance**

- a) Biographies written by and of their class or ensemble.
- b) Scenes from various dramatic material studied over the course of the year.

## **B. Study of Dramatic Material**

- 1. Each student will learn the political, spiritual and artistic significance of the dramatic material studied from the personal perspective, as well as that of the time and author.**
- 2. Each student will study the dramatic material from the perspective of an actor, director and audience**
3. Each student will study the effect of design in theater on the dramatic material (lights, set, sound, costume and make-up)
4. Each student will pitch concept and design for two or more plays.

## **C. Theater Appreciation**

1. Students listen to and discuss music and art from various time periods studied.
2. Students discover the experience of theater from the purchase of tickets to the curtain call.
3. Lectures and guest speakers by the instructor and area professionals express the application of theater arts to all professional fields including but not limited to education, directing, performing, stage management, editing, writing, casting, critiquing, designing, law, politics and television and film.

## **III. EXPECTATIONS**

Class participation and attention are mandatory. Students will be quizzed on all material covered in class. Dates of quizzes will be announced at least three days in advance. When class time is given for individual work on written assignments or performance, only work on these projects is permitted. All written work must be completed on time. Power-point, podcast, and photo bucket presentations are encouraged. Group assignments are graded on an individual basis. All students will participate in a performance final exam each semester (for an invited audience of family and friends). Two papers will be assigned over the period of a semester as well as one design or pitch per student. Students are expected to take care of all costumes and props provided them by the drama department, and to observe all safety precautions when using paints, ladders and tools.

## **IV. TEXT USED**

Antigone by Sophocles  
Much Ado About Nothing by William Shakespeare  
The Learned Ladies by Moliere  
The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams

All copies of text will be provided by the Instructor

## **V. MATERIALS NEEDED**

One black and white composition book.

## **VI. GRADING POLICY**

- A. Grades will be made up of class participation and creative input throughout both semesters. In addition grades will represent, two papers, quizzes on dramatic material, one design and performance per semester.
- B. The Grade Breakdown for semester grades is as follows:
  - Class Participation 40%
  - Tests/Papers & Projects 25%
  - Quizzes 15%
  - Homework & Journaling 20%

The mid-term and final exam grade is 20% of the semester grade.

\*\*\*\*The mid-term final exam is scheduled for 4th Period on January 9th, 2012<sup>th</sup>. Rehearsal if from 3-6 p.m. Failure to appear will result in a failing grade on the final.\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*Students are invited to audition for roles or volunteer for design and crew for both the Fall plays ANTIGONE by Sophocles and Aristophanes THE BIRDS or the spring musical HAIRSPRAY\*\*\*\*